

Department of Planning and Budget 2020 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number: HB1695

House of Origin	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduced	<input type="checkbox"/> Substitute	<input type="checkbox"/> Engrossed
Second House	<input type="checkbox"/> In Committee	<input type="checkbox"/> Substitute	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enrolled

2. Patron: Bulova

3. Committee: Passed Both Houses

4. Title: Wildlife Corridor Action Plan; road construction projects.

5. Summary: This bill directs the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, to create a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (the Plan). The Plan shall identify wildlife corridors, defined as areas connecting fragmented wildlife habitats that are separated by human activities or infrastructure, and recommend wildlife crossing projects intended to promote driver safety and wildlife connectivity. The bill requires the Plan to be submitted to the Chairs of the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources by September 1, 2022, and every four years thereafter. The bill also provides that the Department of Transportation shall (i) include the impact on any wildlife corridor identified in the Plan in any environmental impact report for a highway construction project and (ii) consider measures for the mitigation of harm caused to wildlife by a highway in the design options for the construction of such highway.

6. Budget Amendment Necessary: See item 8, below.

7. Fiscal Impact Estimates: Final. See Item 8.

8. Fiscal Implications: The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) anticipates a nominal fiscal impact, as it already has many of the resources needed to begin the proposed corridor planning process. However, the agency anticipates that focusing on such efforts will impact the delivery of existing priority programs and services to Virginians.

This bill will require the Department of Transportation (VDOT) to amend its environmental review process prior to the initiation of a construction project and include an environmental impact statement identifying any existing terrestrial or aquatic wildlife corridor identified in the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan. Pursuant to the provisions of this bill, VDOT will be required to identify all construction project design options and develop mitigation measures for any identifiable harm to terrestrial and aquatic wildlife.

It is anticipated that this bill will result in an indeterminate fiscal impact to VDOT. The agency indicates that in order to effectively comply with the provisions of this bill, the agency will likely have to develop additional standards and design guidelines which will

have a fiscal, programmatic, and administrative impact. The more significant impacts will likely be placed on infrastructure project budgets and if enacted will require additional administrative oversight to execute. VDOT will also need to develop “priority” wildlife corridor designs associated with construction projects. If VDOT is required to use the suggested mitigation techniques, as provided to meet the Plan goals, this will likely increase project costs. VDOT indicates that the magnitude of those costs is unknown and would only be clear once the Plan is developed and project impacts are known.

It is anticipated that this bill will not result in a fiscal impact to the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected: Department of Game and Inland Fisheries; Department of Transportation; Department of Conservation and Recreation

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No.

11. Other Comments: This bill is the companion to SB 1004.